

GOOD STORIES FOR CHILDREN

By Walt McDougall

JOHNNY GREEN AND McDOUGALL VISIT STRANGE ANIMAL HOME

The Boy Found a Wizard's Wishing Purse and by Accident Discovered its Powers to Carry Persons to Any Place They Wished

ONCE there was a wizard who had, among other wonderful things, two magic purses for either of which anybody would have given a vast sum of money. One of these purses would restore health, purify the blood, strengthen the nerves, promote digestion and tone the whole system as well as any medicine and much quicker, for it acted as soon as you had it in your hand; besides which it could always be filled, by wishing, with money, no matter how much you spent. The other purse, which also was well filled, would carry you, in an instant, by its magic to any land you wished to visit, no matter how far away it was.

The wizard lived alone, and when he died, strangers carried away all of his property, but the two shabby old purses were tossed out into the back yard. There they lay for a long time, until one day little Johnny Green picked them up and, boy-like, carried them home. When he entered the house his mother, who had been bedridden for nineteen years, and whom even Dr. McGowan never expected to see on her feet again, asked him what he had in his hands. John placed the two old purses on the bed. "I found them in Mr. Skeezick's back yard," said he. "I don't suppose they're any use." His mother took up the Health-purse, and, of course, as soon as it was in her hand she was cured. The blood began to tingle in her body, her eyes grew bright and she sat up. Then she put one foot out of bed, which caused John to gasp in amazement, but when she jumped to the floor like a girl, he almost fell off of his chair. Mrs. Green danced about the room in great glee, and her husband running in to see what was making so much noise, almost fainted to see his wife out of bed.

"I am cured!" cried John's mother. "I feel like a ten-year-old child!"

"It must have been McGowan's Liniment did it," said Mr. Green.

"I really believe it was this old purse!" she cried. "As soon as I touched it I felt like a new woman!"

"Impossible!" said Mr. Green. "That would be witchcraft and magic!"

"It came from the old wizard's back yard," remarked John; "and perhaps it is a magic purse. I've read about them in fairy tales."

SOON CURED THE FATHER, TOO

"Nonsense!" said his father. "Those times are past. There are no wizards now and magic is only practiced in vaudeville shows. Something else, electricity or the liniment, has done it. Anyhow, mother is cured, that's certain. Let's see the old purse."

Now Mr. Green had asthma, rheumatism and weak eyes, and the moment he touched the magic purse he felt that his eyesight was like a hawk's for keenness. He started, and then as he realized how good he suddenly felt a funny expression came upon his face.

"I really believe it's got some queer power. I feel as if my asthma had gone."

He threw out his chest. "I can breathe easily!" he shouted. "Hurrah! I've lost my rheumatism, too!" He jumped up and down like a boy. "It's a magic purse, sure as you're born! I feel like a two-year-old!"

"I wonder if the other one is magic, too," said John. "It's just as old and shabby."

His parents examined it, but, of course, there was nothing about the purse to indicate its powers.

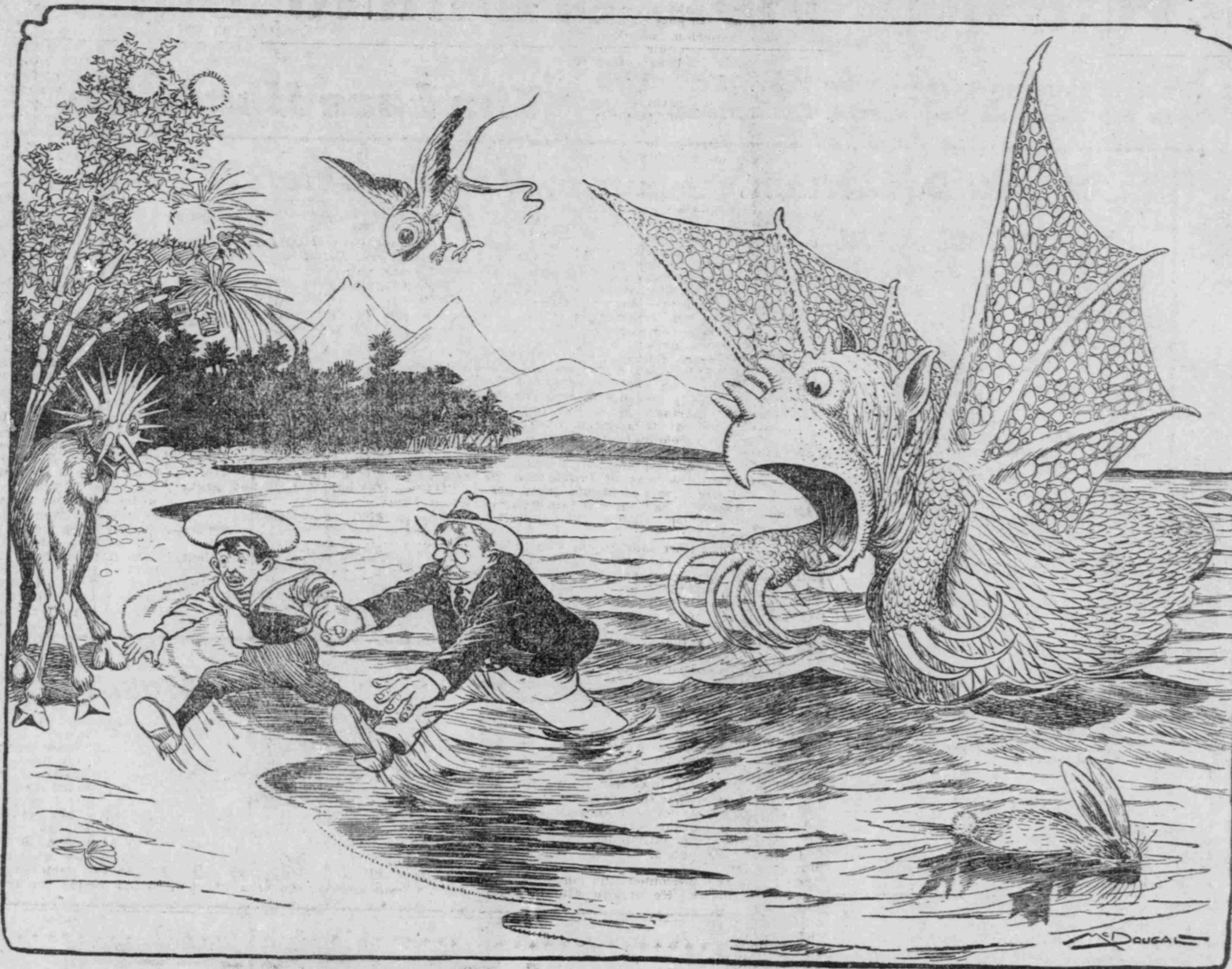
"Perhaps," said his mother, "it is a wishing purse. I've heard of them."

"So've I," replied John. "I wish it were full of money."

Of course, the purse instantly filled with gold ten-dollar pieces, and then they wished the other full, and, to their surprise, it was also found to be in the same condition.

"It's a magic purse, all right," said Mr. Green. "I suppose it only has to be emptied in order to be filled again. We'll try it."

They emptied and filled the purse with gold coin again and again, until they had a scuttful of it and were thoroughly satisfied as to the powers of both. Mr. Green put the Health purse in his pocket, for he wished to cure several of his friends, and John took the other, the Traveling purse.



JOHNNY GREEN AND I MADE A DASH FOR THE SHORE

He brought it to me and told me what had happened. I examined the purse with great interest. In all my experience I had never seen such a wonder, and yet, even with my knowledge of magic, witchcraft and sorcery, I was unable to guess what this particular kind of purse was capable of accomplishing. It was made of green leather with brass clasps, and was worn very thin as well as very much soiled. I handed it back to John, saying:

"It is undoubtedly a magic wishing purse, but I guess it's only one of the kind that fills when you wish it filled."

John had his fingers on the purse as he replied: "If it's good for anything else I wish it could take us to the place where all the funny animals live. That you tell us about."

Now, as I still had hold of the purse as well as John, of course, it was just the same as if only one held it, and immediately his wish came true.

Without knowing how we got there, we suddenly found ourselves standing under a tree at the edge of a forest and away off to the left stretched a vast, sandy desert, over which we could see many animals running, hopping or walking.

"Gee!" cried John. "What's happened to us?"

"Why—this is a Traveling purse!" I said. "I have heard of magic trunks and rugs that would take you anywhere, and that's what the purse has done. We are probably in the place where the queer animals live."

"Well, we can wish ourselves away if they go for us, can't we?" asked John.

"I suppose so, but you must remember that we both had hold of the purse," said I, "and not go wishing yourself away and leave me here, for, although I like to write about these animals, I have no desire to be at their mercy."

"Then you keep the purse yourself," said he, "for I might get excited and forget."

So I put the purse in my pocket and we began to walk along the edge of the wood.

"Look at that funny tree! And that! And that!" cried John. "There's a bush that's growing spools of cotton!"

"Yes, that's the cotton plant. I recognize its leaves," I said; "but I've never seen it growing cotton on spools. Here we see cotton growing in all conditions—cotton batting on this bush, spool-thread there, cloth yonder, and even gun cotton, which is very explosive and dangerous, indeed!"

"Let's get farther away!" said John. "It might go off."

"There's a rubber plant," said I, for I knew that

John was well versed in botany, and I am, for I was born at Botany Bay. "You may recognize its broad leaves. Here it grows rubber in all shapes—boots, shoes, pencil erasers, balls, bicycle tires, hose and even coats."

"It's wonderful!" cried John.

"It is, indeed," I replied, for I was as much astonished as he. A little farther on we saw tall trees, like chestnuts or oaks, bearing canned goods—peaches, cherries, apples, tomatoes—and not only fruit, but plum pudding, pork pies, clams, oysters and soups in cans—which was truly bewildering.

We knocked off several of the cans with sticks and cut them open, so that we were convinced that the labels on the cans told what was within.

"Nobody need starve here," said John, with his mouth filled with canned chicken.

We made a lunch of terrapin, pickles, cream cheese, rabbit and currant jelly, and just as we finished we got our first glimpse close at hand of one of the funny animals of this land. It came hopping and skipping out of the forest and passed us without seeing us among the can trees. We could not tell what sort of a beast it was, for it went too fast, but it seemed to be made up of several different animals. It had a neck like that of a giraffe, legs like a kangaroo, and a cow's body and tail. John declared that it also had wings and a lamp on its back, but these I did not see.

FOUND MANY STRANGE PLANTS

"If we meet any more like that, I'll look more carefully at him," said John. "What would you call it?"

"It was a Polynoodle, very likely," I answered. "At least it looked like one."

John was greatly impressed with my wisdom, saying that he wondered how my head could hold it all, and I sometimes marvel at it myself.

We examined many other vegetable wonders, including tobacco plants that grew ready-made cigars, sticking up from the ground like asparagus; oyster plants, with pickled oysters; eggplants bearing boiled and fried eggs; flute and trumpet bushes all covered with these instruments; plants that squirted ink at us as cuttlefishes do; others that whistled like birds or croaked like frogs, and trees that bore nuts that exploded like fire crackers every second. The noise was terrific and it made my poor head ache. Then we came to an opening in the forest where we saw millions of buttercups, each with a pat of butter in its centre, and there we saw several animals busy devouring the yellow stuff

with delight. Their appearance was startling indeed.

One looked like an elephant, but he had immensely long legs, like a stork's, yet with real elephant's feet. His eyes, however, were on the end of his trunk, and this gave him a most amazing appearance. These little eyes blinked and squinted like a rat's, and he seemed to watch us with a keen suspicion.

"You'd better not go too near him," I cautioned. "He looks as if he were cross."

"I had no idea of approaching him," replied John. "Is he an elephant?"

"He's an 'elephantower,' or 'Elephantallus,' as the scientists call it, because he's so tall."

"Then that's a horselowsus," said John, pointing to another creature near us, which, with a horse's head and body, had legs like a seal or some other aquatic creature, real flippers that hardly enabled him to crawl along.

"No; that a hipposprawl, or seahorse," I replied. "I never saw one alive before. He's a beauty."

"I'd not like to ride on him if I were in a hurry," said John. "A snail could beat him!"

"Not in the water," said I. "There he can shoot along like a steamboat. See that thing yonder?"

"What is it?" asked John, as he gazed at a creature shaped like an immense turtle, whose back seemed composed of layers of round flat discs.

"That's the Griddolus, or the Living Pancake Animal. Those are hot pancakes on his back, hundreds of them, and a man who owns a griddolus never need starve."

"I'd like one right now," cried John, who, although he was full of canned goods, was still able to eat again.

"Then take some. The Griddolus will not harm you," said I, and John immediately helped himself to some delicious cakes. At this moment the seahorse commenced to snort tremendously, and upon the scene appeared a number of great birds resembling ostriches, but with the heads of monkeys.

They solemnly stalked across the clearing, the monkey faces grinning at us in strange contrast to the dignity of their strides. Behind them came a real monkey, who held in his arms a curious object, which I thought was a cuttlefish, but when I approached him closer and he dropped his burden I saw that it was another sort of creature. It was brown and white, flat-squarish in shape, with feelers on all sides. It moved slowly and painfully.

"What on earth is it?" asked John.

"That's a Spiny Rolypoly," I answered. Even as I spoke, it opened itself as if its body were a huge mouth, and, looking inside, we could see its different compartments for storing food and one of them full of pebbles to keep it on the bottom of the water, from whence the monkey had taken it.

"That's another kind of a purse, isn't it?" cried John; "but I don't think he'd grant us a wish."

"No, indeed; but, perhaps, on the contrary, he'd snap off one of your fingers."

"Here comes another curious one," said the boy, and I saw a gigantic ball rolling along the grass. It looked exactly like a chestnut burr, but was as large as a hog's head.

"That's a Spiny Rolypoly," I cried.

"It looks like a porcupine that's had a haircut," said John. The little red eyes of the Rolypoly gleamed wickedly, but it rolled by without stopping and relieved me very much, for it is a dangerous animal, as its spines give you the "nervous megrims" if they stick into you. So far none of these curious creatures seemed at all anxious to interfere with us as we sauntered along, but when we reached the end of the forest and came out upon a white sea beach we saw others of a more ferocious aspect.

There was the horned Syllabub, that look like a cross between a bear and a moose, which pawed the ground and snorted furiously; and beyond it, under the shade of a tree that grew red worsted slippers, stood a Matriculatus. This animal has the strange power of shooting its head, all covered with spikes, at any object he aims at, and he shoots like a champion rifle shot, too. When he nails anything to a tree with these spikes he runs up and seizes it with his enormous paws and, after replacing his head on his neck, proceeds to devour his prey. I instantly recognized the Matriculatus, as I had seen pictures of him before. "We'd better get away," I exclaimed. "That's a dangerous beast, and he's had tempered now."

We were afraid to pass along the sand in front of the animal, so we waded out into the water and evaded him, as he dreads getting his feet wet. While wading John suddenly exclaimed:

"Look! There's a sea jackass!"

GOING BACK SOME DAY

Sure enough, there came along under the transparent water a creature that was like the hipposprawl only it had a donkey's ears, but on closer inspection we saw that it was a sea rabbit. Larger than ordinary hares and with fur like a seal's, its legs were finished off with broad flippers, but there was the cotton tail that proved it to be a rabbit. Like that animal, it was timid, and when it saw us it darted away into the green depths. While we were wondering at this curious thing there emerged from the sea an enormous object, something larger than all the rest put together, towering over the water a hundred feet in the air, extending a pair of wings or broad fins, I cannot tell which, far over the water. Its body was like an immense sponge, so I judge it came from a great depth below the surface, and its head seemed part fish, part alligator and part rhinoceros, if one can imagine such a mixture. Although so much of it was out of the water, much more remained below, as the sea was boiling and surging for a mile from shore as it dashed toward us.

"Run for shore!" I cried, seizing John's hand, and we turned, but there waiting for us on the sand stood the terrible red-eyed Matriculatus waiting.

"We are lost," sobbed the boy; and truly it did seem that we could not escape, but drawing out the purse, I extended it to John, who quickly seized it. The great monster's open jaws were just above us as I cried:

"I wish we were at home; quick!"

The next moment we were at John's house, but it was a new house, a real palace, and then when we had recovered from our scare, we found that we had been away for seven months instead of a few hours, and Mr. Green had been taking gold out of his purse every day besides getting big fees for curing people, and that he was now called Dr. Green by everybody.

Some day John and I are going to take a lot of children on a wishing excursion and see more of these queer animals. Do you want to go?

WALT McDOUGALL.

